

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 HERMOS 00099 032220Z  
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO  
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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: SENV, MX  
SUBJ: POLLUTION OF SAN PEDRO RIVER

REF: MEXICO 05092

1. PROBLEM OF POLLUTION OF SAN PEDRO RIVER AROSE DURING A VISIT TO THE CANANEA MINING COMPANY BY UNDERSIGNED ON MARCH 17. COMPANY SECRETARY GENERAL ENGINEER RUBEN VELASCO MENTIONED CONCERN OF THE MEXICAN AUTHORITIES AND THE COMPANY OVER THIS PROBLEM, AND STATED THAT THE COPPER MINE WAS SEEKING TO ELIMINATE SOURCES OF POLLUTION FROM ITS FACILITIES.

2. ENGINEER VELASCO, DURING TOUR OF MINING, CONCENTRATOR, AND SMELTING OPERATIONS, DESCRIBED THE PHYSICAL LAYOUT OF THE CANANEA AREA. THE COPPER MINE IS SITUATED ASTRIDE A MOUNTAIN RIDGE WHICH FORMS THE DIVIDER BETWEEN THE UPPER WATERSHEDS OF THE SAN PEDRO RIVER TO THE NORTH AND THE SONORA RIVER TO THE SOUTH. ALTHOUGH SOME LONG PAID-OUT MINING OPERATIONS HAD DRAINED NORTH TO THE SAN PEDRO, CURRENT OPEN PIT MINING OPERATIONS DO SO SOUTH TO THE SONORA, AS DO THE MINE TAILINGS. THE SMELTER OPERATION IS ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF THE RIDGE, AND DRAINAGE FROM SLAG HEAPS WOULD FLOW INTO THE SAN PEDRO, WHILE THE CONCENTRATOR DRAINAGE FLOWS SOUTH.  
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3. THE CITY OF CANANEA, WITH APPROXIMATELY 24,000 POPULATION, LIES ASTRIDE THE SAME RIDGE EAST OF THE MINE AND BELOW IT. ACCORDING TO ENGINEER VELASCO, ONE-THIRD OF THE POPULATION LIVES ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF THE RIDGE AND TWO-THIRDS ON THE SOUTH SLOPE, WITH PROPORTIONAL AMOUNTS OF RAIN RUNOFF AND MUNICIPAL WASTE WATERS FLOWING NORTH INTO THE SAN PEDRO AND

SOUTH INTO THE SONORA.

4. THE PROBLEM OF POLLUTION OF THE RIVERS WAS MINIMAL IN PAST YEARS BECAUSE OF LOW RAINFALL AND RUNOFF INTO THE RIVERS. HOWEVER, THIS PAST WINTER, PARTICULARLY IN FEBRUARY, RECORD RAINFALL WAS RECORDED, WITH THE FEBRUARY TOTAL OVER FOUR TIMES THE NORMAL AVERAGE. SIMILARLY, THE SNOWPACK IN THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS, PARTICULARLY ON THE NORTH FACING SLOPES WHICH NORMALLY DRAIN INTO THE SAN PEDRO BASIN, HAS BEEN MUCH HEAVIER THIS YEAR THAN PREVIOUSLY. ON DATE OF VISIT IN CLEAR WEATHER AND WITH THE NOON DAY TEMPERATURE AT SIX THOUSAND FEET ELEVATION AROUND EIGHTY DEGREES, ABUNDANT SNOW WAS VISIBLE IN THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS AT HIGHER ELEVATIONS. YET THE ARROYO BELOW CANANEA WHICH DRAINS THE SMELTER AREA AND NORTH SIDE OF THE CITY WAS NOT FLOWING, ALTHOUGH SMALL POOLS OF WATER WERE VISIBLE.

5. ENGINEER VELASCO INDICATED THAT MINING COMPANY WILL INSTALL THE FACILITIES NEEDED TO CONVEY DRAINAGE FROM THE SMELTER OPERATION ACROSS THE RIDGE AND TO THE TAILINGS BASIN WHICH DRAINS INTO THE UPPER SONORA RIVER.

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## Message Attributes

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**Subject:** POLLUTION OF SAN PEDRO RIVER  
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